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ABSTRACT

Spillover and compensation are two recurrent hypotheses concerning the relationship between work and nonwork. Spillover proposes a basic similarity between an individual's activities and feelings in both the world of work, and nonwork; compensation proposes fundamental dissimilarity between the individual's world of work and nonwork. To focus on individual and situational characteristics predictive of spillover or compensation three hypotheses were examined for the relationships expected between spillover, compensation, and intrinsic work satisfaction: (1) satisfaction with work is positively related to the tendency to engage in nonwork activities that spill over from work activities; (2) satisfaction with work is negatively related to the tendency to engage in nonwork activities that compensate for work activities, and (3) both spillover and compensation with respect to a single job are possible. Employees (N=81) completed a questionnaire designed to elicit information about leisure and work activities. Analyses of results supported all three hypotheses and indicated that two-thirds of the sample experienced both spillover and compensation between their leisure and job activities. The findings suggest that the general tendencies for individuals to compensate or spillover is not as crucial as the specific activities and specific personal meanings associated with spillover and compensation. Further research is suggested to determine if these conclusions can be applied to a broad band of the labor force. (PAS)

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WORK AND NONWORK: AN ANALYSIS OF PERSONAL MEANING

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Work and Nonwork:
An Analysis of Personal Meaning

Based on his review of social science and philosophical writings, Wilensky (1960) identified spillover and compensation as two recurrent hypotheses concerning the relationship between work and nonwork. As indicated in several more recent reviews, these two hypotheses still play a very important role in both theoretical developments and empirical research (e.g., Champoux, 1981; Kabanoff, 1980; Near, Rice & Hunt, 1980; Rice, Near & Hunt, 1980; and Staines, 1980).

The spillover hypothesis proposes that there is a basic similarity between the individual's activities and feelings in the world of work and his/her activities and feelings in the world of nonwork. As noted by Staines (1980), several different mechanisms have been proposed to account for the spilling over of work into the domain of nonwork.

The compensation hypothesis proposes that there is a fundamental dissimilarity between the worlds of work and nonwork. The person seeks rewarding nonwork activities to compensate for work activities that fail to satisfy important personal needs such as creativity, self-expression, and personal development. Staines (1980) has also identified several different mechanisms suggested as means of accounting for a compensatory pattern.

Personal Meaning of Activities

In their insightful analysis of work and leisure, Kando and Summers (1971) noted the importance of distinguishing between the objective form and the personal meaning of activities in both the leisure and work domains. Form refers to the externally describable characteristics of the behavior. Meaning concerns the subjective definition and value of the behavior to the actor himself. According to Kando and Summers (1971), much of the difficulty encountered

in research on spillover and compensation stems directly from the failure to consider the distinction between form and meaning. Activity with identical objective form can have different subjective meanings for different people. For example, painting one's house over the weekend may represent relaxation for one person and sense of accomplishment for another. Alternatively, different activities can have the same meaning for different people. For example, one person may attempt to compensate for lack of on-the-job socialization by joining a country club, while another compensates for this job deficiency by playing on a softball team.

Both spillover and compensation involve personal meaning. The researcher cannot determine that either spillover or compensation has occurred simply by viewing the external form of someone else's work and nonwork activities. To assess either of these phenomena, it is necessary to explore the subjective meaning of the relevant activities to the actor him/herself. Consequently, the focus of the present study was on the personal meaning of both work and nonwork activities.

Individual and Situational Differences

While seldom stated explicitly, the spillover and compensation hypotheses have generally been viewed from a nomothetic perspective, i.e., as proposing alternative views of the general form of the relationship between work and nonwork. Kando and Summers (1971) were among the first to point to the weakness of such a view. They suggested that it was unfruitful to pit these two hypotheses against one another, trying to see which would account for more of the empirical data. As an alternative, they suggested that research should try to identify individual and situational characteristics that predict when spillover will occur and when compensation will occur. Ten years later, Champoux (1981) was forced to repeat the call for research focusing on such predictors.

The present study follows the Kando and Summers (1971) directive to examine differences in the tendency to spill over or to compensate. The variable examined in this manner was the individual's intrinsic satisfaction with work, i.e., his/her satisfaction with the actual content of work activities. The following hypotheses were offered in regard to the relationships expected between spillover, compensation, and satisfaction with work activities.

Hypothesis 1: Satisfaction with work activities is positively related to the tendency to engage in nonwork activities that spill over from work activities.

Hypothesis 2: Satisfaction with work activities is negatively related to the tendency to engage in nonwork activities that compensate for work activities.

In testing these hypotheses we examined leisure activities identified by respondents as things they "really enjoy doing when not on the job." With this operational definition of leisure, it seems safe to assume that most people find enjoyment in their leisure activities. On the other hand, people are expected to vary widely in the degree to which they find such enjoyment in work activities. For people high on satisfaction with work activities, we predict that there will be similarity in the meaning of work and leisure. For this group, there will be some overlap (spillover) in the meaning found in their organizationally imposed but intrinsically satisfying work and in their freely-chosen leisure activities. Conversely, we predict that there will be a sharp dissimilarity between the meanings of work activities and leisure activities for those who are low on satisfaction with work activities. When required work activities are not enjoyed by people, they are likely to seek enjoyable leisure activities with personal meaning quite different from that associated with work.

Joint Occurrence of Spillover and Compensation

Spillover and compensation may occur simultaneously. The same individual may experience spillover for certain work and leisure activities and compensation for others. Furthermore, the same activities may have multiple meanings for the individual. Some of these meanings may involve compensation while others involve spillover. Based on our personal experiences of work and the intuitive appeal of this line of speculation, we offer our final hypothesis.

Hypothesis 3: Many individuals experience both spillover and compensation with respect to their single job.

We know of no previous research that has tried to test this hypothesis in a way that focuses on the individual's experience. Champoux's (1980) research comes close to providing such a test, but his results are presented at a group level of analysis that does not address directly Hypothesis 3. His subjects used the same set of semantic differential scales to describe both work and nonwork. His results were in the form of statistical relationships between descriptions of work and nonwork. He reported that for certain groups, the work-nonwork relationship was positive for some descriptors and negative for others. From such group based data, it is impossible to tell how many individuals actually experienced both similarity and dissimilarity between their work and nonwork worlds. The present study extends the work of Champoux (1980) by bringing such analysis to this level of the individual.

Method

Subjects

Subjects for this study were employees at an aerospace company in the northeastern United States. A random selection of 465 prospective subjects was generated from the firm's payroll list. This selection included employees from each of the company's 13 job classifications.

Prospective subjects were mailed a questionnaire along with a cover letter explaining the study. As the study was not being conducted at the request of the aerospace firm, it was made clear that completion of the questionnaire was not a company requirement. A stamped envelope, addressed directly to the researcher's residence, was included with the questionnaire to facilitate its return. There was a very low overall return rate for this questionnaire (17.4%), resulting in a sample size of 81.[1]

The average age of respondents was 47 (SD = 13) and the sample was predominantly male (79%). The level of education was mixed: 40% having no college degree, 7% having an associate's degree, 38% having a bachelor's degree, 11% having a master's degree, and 4% having doctoral degrees. Among the 81 respondents, 9 were classified as office/clerical staff, 21 were professional, 13 were technical, 22 were officials/managers, and 16 were from the company's nine blue collar job classifications.

Data Collection Procedure

The first section of the questionnaire was designed to elicit information about the respondent's leisure activities and his/her reasons for engaging in those activities. These particular procedures were adopted to avoid the previously discussed limitations inherent in having the researcher impose his/her own interpretation as to the personal meaning of the subject's leisure or work activities. The respondent was instructed to think of the activities s/he "really enjoys doing while not on-the-job" and to list up to four of these activities. From this list, the respondent was to choose the activity s/he enjoyed doing the most and write the name of that activity in the space provided. To elicit the personal meaning of each activity, the respondent was asked to think of one or two reasons why s/he enjoyed engaging in that particular activity. The spaces for the two responses were labeled "reason 1" and "reason 2." The subject was instructed to

place his/her response to "reason 1" in the blank and then to answer a question that read:

How often do you get to _____ at your job?

1. Very often
2. Fairly often
3. Sometimes
4. Once in a while
5. Never

The subject was then asked:

How often would you like to do this at your job?

1. Much more often than I get to now
2. Somewhat more often than I get to now
3. About as often as I get to now
4. Somewhat less often than I get to now
5. Much less often than I get to now

These same two questions were repeated with respect to activity 1, reason 2; activity 2, reasons 1 and 2; activity 3, reasons 1 and 2; and activity 4, reasons 1 and 2. Thus, as many as eight sets of responses to these two questions were provided by each respondent.

Spillover and compensation scores. The data from the questions in part one of the questionnaire provided two methods of assessing compensation and one method for assessing spillover.

Frequency scores. The first method of measuring spillover and compensation utilized the question concerning the frequency with which the reasons for different leisure activities occur on-the-job. An activity was considered spillover if the individual reported the reason under question to be present on the job either "very often," or "fairly often." This reflects a perceived similarity between the meaning of leisure and work activities. A report of "once in a while," or "never" was classified as a compensation response, reflecting a perceived dissimilarity between the meaning of leisure and work activities. A response of "sometimes" was classified as neutral, as it expressed

neither spillover nor compensation; neither similarity nor dissimilarity of work and leisure can be inferred from such a response.

A percentage score was calculated for each individual for each of the three categories (spillover, compensation, and neutral). The number of responses so categorized was divided by the total number of responses given by the individual for engaging in his/her leisure activities. As 37 of the 81 respondents provided less than the eight reasons possible on the questionnaire, this conversion to percentage was essential to make the responses of all the subjects comparable.

Compensation as desire. The second method for assessing compensation was in terms of the extent to which the individual desires the underlying meaning of his/her leisure activities to be present on-the-job. The second question in each pair of questions dealt with this desire. Responses which indicated that the individual would like the meaning of his/her leisure activity to be present on the job "much more often" or "somewhat more often than now" were classified as compensation. The three remaining responses were interpreted as indicating no desire for increased frequency and therefore were not considered compensation.

A percentage desire-compensation score was calculated for each subject in the same manner as the frequency percentages were calculated.

Satisfaction with Work Activities. This measure, adapted from Brayfield and Rothe's (1951) scale of job satisfaction, constituted the second part of the questionnaire. The 11 item scale used in this study retained the Likert scale first-person singular format of the original scale, but the wording of several items was modified to focus the subject's attention on the specific duties s/he was required to perform as a result of his/her job. This modification involved replacing general terms like "work" or "job" with the specific referent of "my job activities." Sample scale items are:

My work activities are like a hobby to me.

I definitely dislike my work activities.

I find real enjoyment in my work activities.

Reliability

The alpha coefficient of internal consistency for the satisfaction with work activities scale was .89. The percentage scores calculated for each individual to reflect the spillover, compensation, and neutral patterns do not lend themselves to an analysis of internal consistency since a single percentage score is given to each individual for each of the three categories of response. However, we were able to get some indication of reliability for the frequency and desire questions used to construct these percentage scores. Coefficient alpha was calculated for responses to each of these two questions among that subgroup of 44 respondents providing complete data for all four activities that could possibly be described on the questionnaire. The value of alpha was .70 for the frequency question and .79 for the desire question.

Results and Discussion

The combination of structured and open-ended components in the data collection procedure provides opportunity for both quantitative and qualitative modes of analysis. We present first the empirical tests of the three hypotheses. The second section of results is more exploratory and descriptive, presenting the activities and meanings actually offered by respondents as expressions of spillover and compensation in their own lives.

Quantitative Analyses

The intercorrelations presented in Table 1 provide the information needed to test Hypotheses 1 and 2. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, there was a significant positive correlation between satisfaction with work activities and the spillover score based on responses to the frequency questions ($r = .26$, $p = .01$, one-tailed). The more satisfied respondents were with their work activities, the higher the percentage of leisure meanings reported as occurring often on-the-job.

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Insert Table 1 about here

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Hypothesis 2 was also supported. Using either the frequency questions or the desire questions, the correlation between satisfaction with work activities and compensation was negative and statistically significant ($r = -.21$ and $-.23$ respectively, $p = .03$ one-tailed). The less satisfied respondents were with their work activities, the higher the percentage of leisure meanings reported as occurring infrequently on the job. Similarly, the less satisfied respondents were with their work activities, the higher their desire compensation score (i.e., the greater percentage of leisure meanings which they would like to experience more often on their jobs).

We turn now to the joint occurrence of spillover and segmentation predicted by Hypothesis 3. Based on their scores on the frequency questions, subjects were placed into one of seven mutually exclusive categories corresponding to their work/leisure relationship. The first three categories account for those people who use only one of the three response patterns (compensation, spillover, and neutral). The next three categories account for those people who utilize a combination of two of the three response patterns. And finally, the seventh category represents those people who exhibited all three response patterns.

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Insert Table 2 about here

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The results in Table 2 provide strong support for Hypothesis 3. Over 40% of the sample population utilize all three of the response patterns when describing the frequency of experiencing leisure meanings on the job. A total of 67% utilize at least both compensation and spillover in respect to their

job. Less than 10% of the sample use only spillover or only compensation. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, it appears that the leisure activities of a single individual can reflect both spillover and compensation. Indeed, such a pattern appears to be the rule rather than the exception. These results extend the similar conclusions suggested by Champoux (1980) in his analyses of group level data.

Qualitative Analyses

Activities. By counting the number of times a particular activity was mentioned, a list of the most common leisure activities was created. The returned questionnaires yielded 304 responses concerning leisure activities. After grouping similar terms together, 28 different activities were identified. Table 3 contains the 10 most common leisure activities. Table 3 also includes the percentage of times each activity was associated with the compensation, spillover, or neutral response pattern (based on the frequency question).

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Insert Table 3 about here

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Sports included group athletics such as volleyball and bowling, as well as individual sports such as jogging, bicycling, and fishing. Gardening included all activities dealing with landscaping, as well as the one response of "tree farming." Building and repairs were differentiated by certain key words. Activities including the term "fix" or "maintenance" were considered repairs. Responses such as "making things at my workbench" were considered building.

Socializing included any activity where the presence of other people was stressed as being an important element of the activity. Responses such as "dining out with others" were considered socializing, while simply "dining out" was not. Travel included such responses as "visiting new places" and "touring

the country." Music was comprised of both playing and listening.

Reading, watching television, and playing cards were usually mentioned by respondents as general activities, although specific card games and television shows were sometimes reported. The category "other" is comprised of all the remaining activities not making it into the top ten listing. These activities ranged from collecting antiques, to going for walks, to lying in the sun.

In terms of percentages, the five activities most often associated with compensation were sports, travel, gardening, building, and music. The five activities with the highest percentage of spillover responses were repairs, cards, building, gardening, and socializing. Finally, reading, television, music, travel and socializing yielded the highest percentages for the neutral category. Focusing on the raw frequencies rather than the percentages changes the picture only slightly. Reading and socializing are fairly frequent compensation activities even though the associated percentages are not that high. Likewise, sports and reading rank high in terms of raw frequency of spillover responses even though the associated percentages are not high. Finally, sports and repairs rank high in raw frequency for the neutral category even though the associated percentages are low.

While the differences in the activities most commonly associated with spillover and compensation are interesting, the similarity seems more noteworthy. For example, building and gardening yielded high percentages and raw frequencies as <u>both</u> spillover and compensation activities. Sports, by far the most common leisure activity, yielded the highest raw frequency scores for both spillover and compensation. The number of different meanings associated with each of the top ten leisure activities is also noteworthy (column one of Table 3). As many as 18 different reasons were given for participating in one category of leisure activities (sports). Five other activities were associated with 9 or more

different meanings. Although it is not evident in the table, it was noted while coding the questionnaires that several individuals used the same activity as a means to spill over and compensate to different aspects of their job. These several lines of evidence combine to provide strong support for the Kando and Summers (1971) proposition that it is crucial to distinguish between form and meaning.

Meanings. From the list of the 10 most common activities, a list of the 10 most common meanings was created. A total of 264 reasons were reported for engaging in the top 10 activities. When similar terms were grouped together, 38 different reasons were identified. Not taking into account whether the underlying meaning was being compensated for or spilled over, the 10 most common reasons for leisure activities were: 1) relaxation, 2) exercise, 3) socialization, 4) sense of accomplishment, 5) to learn, 6) to be outdoors, 7) for a change of pace, 8) to be creative, 9) for challenge, 10) for excitement (1 = most common, 10 = 10th most common).

Tables 4 and 5 contain the 10 most common underlying meanings for compensation and spillover, respectively. Each table contains the percentage of times that the meaning was associated with compensation (or spillover). Also, each table contains the percentage of time that meaning was used as a compensation (or spillover) with respect to the total number of instances of compensation (or spillover).

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Insert Tables 4 and 5 about here

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The most interesting result from the data in Tables 4 and 5 is the tendency for compensation to be associated with lower order needs such as relaxation and exercise while spillover tends to be associated with higher order needs such as a sense of accomplishment, learning and challenge. Sense of accomplishment, for

example, accounted for 14% of the underlying meanings used as spillover, while the same underlying meaning accounted for only 1.6% of those used for compensation. As another example, relaxation accounted for 28.6% of the reasons for compensation, while the same underlying meaning was not mentioned at all in reference to spillover. However, the overlap in these two tables is also noteworthy. Seven of the personal meanings are listed as being among the top ten meanings associated with both spillover and compensation (i.e., they are listed in both Tables 4 and 5).

Conclusions

Perhaps the most important result of this study was the empirical demonstration that fully two-thirds of the sample experienced both spillover and compensation with regard to the relationship between their leisure and their jobs. Probably because of the high frequency with which spillover and compensation occur jointly, our own effort to analyze general tendencies toward compensation or spillover met with only limited success. The results were consistent with predictions of Hypotheses 1 and 2. The correlation between satisfaction with work activities and spillover was positive while the correlations between satisfaction with work activities and both measures of compensation were negative. However, the magnitude of these statistically significant correlations was not great, accounting for only 4-6% of the variance in the scores used to measure spillover and compensation. In light of the findings concerning joint occurrence of spillover and compensation, the weakness of such relationships is not surprising. We now know that it is the rule rather than the exception for people in this sample to experience both spillover and compensation. Given this pattern, the most crucial issues are not general tendencies for the individual to compensate or to spill over. Rather, the issues of central concern are the specific activities and specific personal meanings associated with spillover and with compensation.

The qualitative analyses of the underlying meanings actually mentioned by respondents suggest that the dimensions on which a job is compensated for may be qualitatively different from the dimensions upon which spillover occur. While there was considerable overlap in the specific underlying meanings found in Tables 4 and 5, the percentage of time each was used as compensation (or spillover) out of all the reasons given for compensation or spillover are remarkably different for several of the meanings identified by respondents. There was a tendency for compensation to be associated with lower order needs and for spillover to be associated with higher order needs.

The value of the Kando and Summers (1971) distinction between form and meaning is illustrated more clearly by the present study than in any previous research of which we are aware. Activities with the same objective form did represent spillover in some cases and compensation in others. Furthermore, a variety of activities with different objective forms were associated with spillover and an equally diverse set of activities were associated with compensation. The simple frequency distributions of the respondent-generated lists of leisure activities and the personal meanings associated with these activities illustrate clearly the dangers of the uninvolved researcher judging whether a given activity is acting as spillover or compensation. Such judgments are valid only from the subjective viewpoint of the respondent.

The data collection procedure used in this study manages to combine many of the advantages of qualitative open-ended inquiry with the ready amenability to quantitative analysis provided by more structured formats. Modifications of this procedure should be quite useful in future research on work and nonwork where there is an interest in the personal meaning underlying specific activities.

The sample used in this study is a major limitation to the potential generalizability of the results reported here. Only a single organization was sampled and the response rate was low. While the size of the sample was

adequate for the analyses performed, nothing can be said about the representativeness of the findings. Further research is needed to determine if the conclusions suggested here can be applied to a broad band of the labor force. It is especially important to determine if the joint occurrence of spillover and compensation is as common in other samples as it was in the present study.

Footnote

[1]This low return rate was probably due in part to the inability to conduct a follow-up mailing because of financial limitations.

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Table 1.

Intercorrelations Among Principal Quantified Variables.

	1	2	3	4	5
1. Spillover (frequency)					
2. Compensation (frequency)	-.62				
3. Compensation (desire)	-.32	.26			
4. Neutral	-.39	-.48	.05		
5. Satisfaction with work activities	.26	-.21	-.23	-.04	
$\overline{X}$	28.23	51.64	60.37	19.49	39.06
SD	26.39	27.74	31.23	23.35	7.11

N = 81

Table 2.

Frequency Distribution of Response Patterns.

Response Pattern	f	%
Spillover only	3	3.6
Compensation only	5	6.2
Neutral only	3	3.6
Spillover and Neutral	2	2.4
Compensation and Neutral	14	17.2
Spillover and Compensation	21	26
Spillover, Compensation, and Neutral	33	41
	N=81	100%

Table 3.

The Ten Most Frequent Leisure Activities.

Rank	Activity	Number of meanings associated with activity	% of total citations	Distribution of Meanings[a] % as compensation	% as spillover	% as neutral
1	Sports	18	34.2 (104)	60.0 (62)	20.0 (21)	20.0 (21)
2	Reading	9	11.5 (35)	31.4 (11)	22.9 (8)	45.7 (16)
3	Gardening	10	7.9 (24)	54.2 (13)	33.3 (8)	12.5 (3)
4	Repairs	10	7.0 (21)	14.3 (3)	61.9 (13)	23.8 (5)
5	Socializing	9	6.3 (19)	42.1 (8)	31.6 (6)	26.3 (5)
6	Travel	7	6.0 (18)	55.6 (10)	16.7 (3)	27.7 (5)
7	Building	10	5.3 (16)	50.0 (8)	50.0 (8)	0.0
8	Television	4	3.6 (11)	36.4 (4)	18.2 (2)	45.4 (5)
9	Cards	6	3.0 (9)	22.2 (2)	55.5 (5)	22.3 (2)
10	Music	3	2.3 (7)	42.9 (3)	14.3 (1)	42.9 (3)
11	Other	—	13.2 (40)	—	—	—
			100.0% (304)			

Note: The values in parentheses are raw frequencies.

[a]Aside from rounding errors, the percentages in the last three columns add up to 100% for the row representing each of the activities listed. These percentages reflect the distribution of meanings among the three response patterns for each leisure activity.

Table 4.

The Most Frequent Personal Meanings for Compensation.

Rank	Personal Meaning	% use as compensation (out of total use)		% of compensation (out of all compensation)
1	Relaxation	100.0	(36)[a]	28.6
2	Exercise	89.4	(17)	13.5
3	Being outdoors	100.0	(11)	9.0
4	Change of pace	77.7	(7)	5.6
5.5	Creativity	80.0	(4)	3.2
5.5	Socializing	28.6	(4)	3.2
7	Learning	25.0	(3)	2.4
8.5	Excitement	66.0	(2)	1.6
8.5	Sense of accomplishment	16.6	(2)	1.6
10	Other	--	(44)	32.0
			(126)	100.0%

[a]The number in parentheses represents the number of times this meaning was used as compensation.

Table 5.

The Most Frequent Personal Meanings for Spillover.

Rank	Personal Meaning	% use as spillover (out of total use)		% of spillover (out of all spillover)
1.5	Sense of accomplishment	83.3	(10)[a]	14.0
1.5	Socializing	71.4	(10)	14.4
3	Learning	75.0	(9)	12.3
4	Challenge	100.0	(4)	5.5
5.5	Change of pace	22.0	(2)	2.7
5.5	Exercise	10.5	(2)	2.7
7.3	Teamwork	100.0	(1)	1.4
7.3	Excitement	33.3	(1)	1.4
7.3	Creativity	20.0	(1)	1.4
10	Other	--	(33)	45.2
			(73)	100.0%

[a]The number in parentheses represents the number of times this meaning was used as spillover.